C2

WHIRRAKEE

November 2011 Vol. 32 No. 10

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552. Web address: www.BendigoFNC.com.au
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2011 - 2012

President	Jan Orr		5443 5668
Senior Vice President	Matthew Comer		0409 162627
Junior Vice President	*position vacant*		
Secretary	Stuart Fraser		5443 1326
Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley		
Treasurer	Ben Goonan		
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley		5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*		
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan		
Librarian	Diana Collier	(an assistant is still required)	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer		0409 162 627
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens	e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Rod Orr		5443 5668

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 32, No. 10, November 2011

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
Short Notices		3
October Notes and Observations	Rod Orr	3
Colour Photo section	various wonderful photographers	4-7
October General Meeting Speaker: 'Carolyn Hall: 'A Touch of Ice'	Sabine Wilkens	9

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note: A few days of warm weather and the lawn needs mowing again. This is brilliant growing weather and apart from unwanted plants, many desirable ones are also getting a really good break – either to continue flowering or to start accumulating material for fruits, seeds and storage organs like bulbs, corms and tubers for next year. Unless, of course, they get burnt.

Front page photograph: Hoary Sunray (Text and Photograph by Rod Orr)
This beautiful daisy occurs in the Harcourt - Castlemaine area and seems to have managed to survive quite well through the recent very dry years. This year, however, after last year's wonderful rain, the roadsides and railway cuttings where it grows are covered with flowering plants. It is able to grow in very poor, rough soil conditions – these plants grew on sloping area on a mound of rubble, probably left over many years ago from works on the Melbourne railway line South of Chewton.

It's easier to remember its Common Name, Hoary Sunray, rather than its Scientific Name, *Leucochrysum albicans* ssp. *albicans* var. *albicans* - which is a bit of a mouthfull!

Short Notices

New Name Badges

New name badges are now available for purchase from:

Bendigo Graphics, 176 Lyttleton Terrace

The new design features the club name and a coloured illustration of a sprig of Fairy Wax-flower, *Philotheca verrucosa,* the club emblem. Your name will be clearly written in large print.

Members have a choice of finish to the badge;

Plain @ $11:00 or Domed @ $16:50

The club has had name badges for many years but, alas, most of us seem to have got out of the habit of wearing them to meetings. This must make things more difficult than it should be for new members, as they get to know us.

So, old members (most of us can truthfully be described as 'old') please find your old badge (if you can) or save up and get a 'snazzy' new one. And new members don't be left out, Bendigo Graphics is easy to find. It's next to the gun shop in the same row of shops as Autobarn in Lyttleton Terrace.

October Notes and Observations

Compiled by Rod Orr

Matt Comer (10 October)

A pair of Diamond Doves was seen at Goornong - sitting on a fence, then flew to a stock trough to drink & then departed.

Annette Mouat

Annette's brother, Douglas Pearse, recently found a snow white *Tetratheca* in the forest on Crusoe Road just past the Crusoe Reservoir (see photo on page 4).

Anne Bridley

Swift Parrots were heard at Junortoun in the last week of September & the first week of October.

Jane Cleary

Observations during a visit to Queensland in September 2011: Here are just a few sightings in, what was for me, a previously unvisited part of Australia.

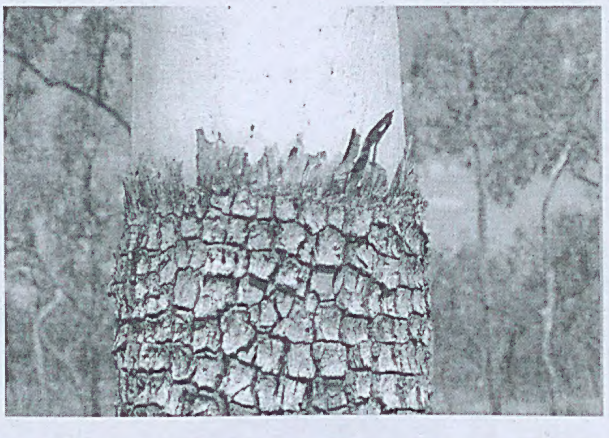
In the Brisbane City Botanic Gardens a family of Stone Curlews was seen.

Mt Coottha Botanic Garden, established after the 1974 floods, now has a collection of large trees. In these and also the Roma St gardens, the White Ibis is a problem.

In the Mt Glorious rainforest, big Tallowood trees (*Eucalyptus microcorys*) dominated the forest with many Strangler Figs encircling dead or dying hosts. A small, white epiphytic orchid was seen in flower. Further North from a base at Boyne Island, we woke to the calls of the Koel. A Pheasant Coucal was observed flopping through the trees. Along the coast, a family of Yellow-bellied Sunbirds was seen in the top of a dead tree, while nearby, Red-backed Wrens flitted through the undergrowth. An unusual eucalypt is the Tesselated Gum (*Corymbia tessellaris*, formerly: *Eucalyptus tessellaris*), which has its lowest 2 metres covered in tesselated bark while, above, its bark is a smooth pale grey, (see photo below). The local Ironbark is *Eucalyptus crebra*.

Walking along the track, I picked up a complete Twisted Ark Shell (*Trisidos tortuosa*). It burrows just below the surface mud in the shallow subtidal zone.

On a ferry trip at sea we saw Osprey nests on marker buoys.



Corymbia tessellaris, Tessellated Gum. Image form the CSIRO Euclid website at: http://www.publish.csiro.au/samples/euclidsample/html/Corymbia_tessellaris.htm

'Albinos' in the Plant Kingdom (Photographer Douglas Pearse and Annette Mouat)

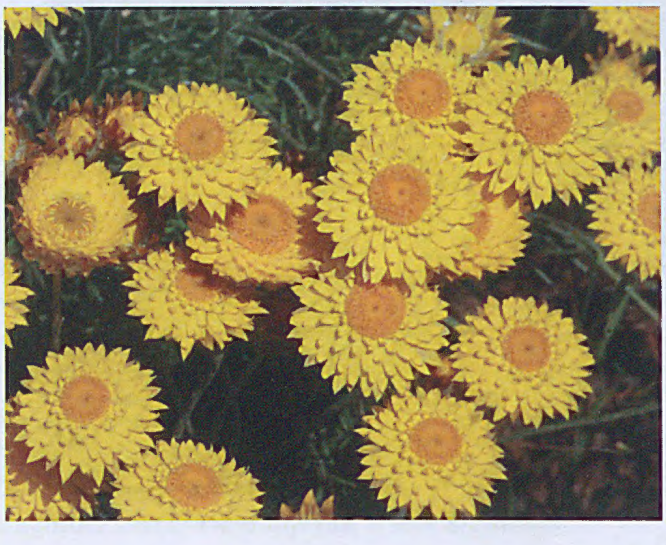
↑
This is *Tetratheca ciliata*, but the common name 'Pink Bells' doesn't seem right…I wonder if it is pollinated.

Philotheca verrucosa, with no hint of pink anywhere ↓
This species has had a good year this year.

Spring in the Bendigo Bush – how good was it this year?

Westringia crassifolia, Whipstick Westringia. For some comments on this rare plant, see page 8.
(Photographer: Rod Orr)

A coloured view of the beautiful Hoary Sunrays from the front page (Photographer Rod Orr) ⬇



Trigger Plant, *Stylidium graminifolium*. This one is a double danger to potential pollinators. They are either clubbered by the trigger or eaten by the resident spider. Photo by Rod Orr

Two varieties of *Grevillea alpina*, red and yellow, photographed off Crusoe Road by Annette Mouat

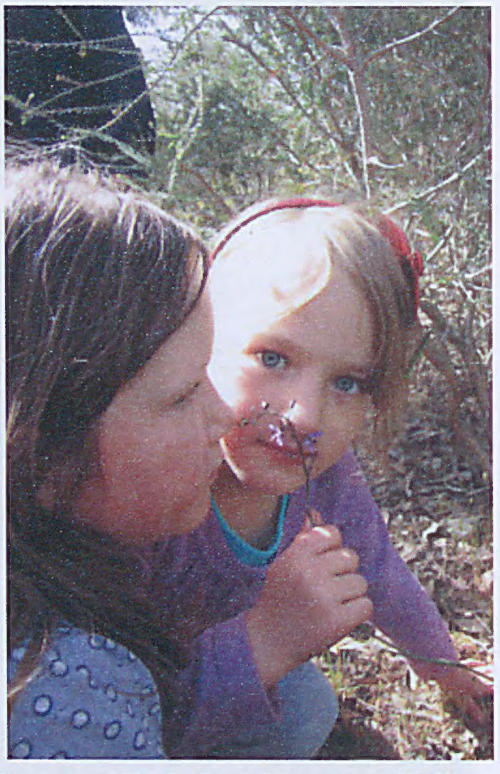
Musky Caladenia (*Caladenia gracilis*) and Purplish Beard orchid (*Calochilus robertsonii*) by R.Orr

Arthropodium strictum , the chocolate lily. This species has been a bit more patchy, compared to others, in its distribution and abundance this year – Why?
(Photographer - Rod Orr)

The top and bottom images are both brilliant views of Wildflower Drive in October. Photographer: Jan Orr

Family Nature Club - Sunday 16th October Looking for wildflowers at Salomon Gully
Photos and text by Tamara Marwood

John Lindner and Rod Orr enjoying the lovely sunshine



What does this flower smell of, chocolate or vanilla?

On Sunday the 16th of October, the Bendigo Family Nature Club visited the wildflowers of Salomon Gully. Accompanied by the spring weather of sudden showers, then a quick ray of sunshine and a gust of wind we headed up the gully.
Hosted by the Bendigo Field Naturalists, we learnt about local wild flowers showing off at this time of year. Rod and Jan of the BFN put together Question Sheets and fantastic ID sheets to help us all spot the flowers. In November we are visiting some very special creatures, don't miss out on this opportunity to befriend our local wildlife with your children. Places are limited. Made possible by the wonderful people of the Bendigo Field Naturalists and the City of Greater Bendigo. Fun and free in our local bush! For details and registration see back page.

The very special Whipstick Westringia
by Rod Orr

I revisited the Whipstick recently to see how this plant was managing and was very pleased with the success of the efforts to protect it after many difficult years. The main threats were from browsing by wallabies and other animals so it was protected, by fencing off the area, where it still managed to survive. The drought prevented the surviving plants from growing strongly or flowering very well, but, this year, many of the protected plants are more than 2 metres tall and covered with flowers (see photo on page 5).

It's a rare species of very restricted natural distribution, although part of the conservation effort was directed at propagation and establishment in other areas, mainly in botanic gardens or through sales from local plant nurseries, so it's much more widespread now.

Looks like the effort has been well worth it!

October General Meeting - Carolyn Hall: 'A Touch of Ice, - Spitsbergen and Greenland 2010'

by Sabine Wilkens

Carolyn is a retired teacher whose speciality is geography and the Pleistocene era. In 2000 Carolyn went to Antarctica (and gave us an account of her adventures) and in 2010 she had to see the other side for comparison. She travelled from Oslo to Svalbard (an archipelago of island between Norway and the North Pole of which Spitsbergen is the largest, see map on right), from there to Greenland and then to Iceland. The climate around these islands is dominated by passing sea currents, and although similarly close to the North Pole, have quite different extremes of temperature. In Spitsbergen, cold currents from the polar circulation flowing past the westerly coastlines make it extremely cold there, while the warm current coming up from the Gulf stream cause a 'milder' climate on the easterly side. The average summer temperature is 4-5 degree Celsius, which is far warmer than areas of continental Russia at similar latitudes. An amazing 60% of the archipelago is classified as nature reserve. From the time of its discovery by the Dutch in 1596 till 1925, Spitsbergen was virtually a no-mans land with whalers, fur trappers and miners from many different nations using it as a base. Many relicts can be seen of their activities today. This must have been a tough existence. The whale blubber was boiled in huge vats. Beluga whales have white skin that can be used like leather, but Bowhead whales were the main target species. Eventually whales disappeared from near the coastline as their food source had become too sparse. Today, Svalbard is under Norwegian sovereignty, but before that, more than 40 nations were represented here.

Map of Norway, including Svalbard
(from http://www.questconnect.org/norway.htm)

When arriving at Svalbard airport, a polar bear greets you in the airport hall. This is probably as much a symbol of the area for tourists, as a warning for them. Polar bears have increasingly 'encroached' on the human-occupied spaces in arctic regions and there have been many incidences, with people getting killed by roaming bears. One of the reasons is that rising temperatures are reducing the incidence of solid ice sheets and polar bears find themselves stranded on land for longer periods than in past decades. Polar bears need solid ice on which they hunt for seals, their main prey, and if this ice appears later in the season and also disappears earlier, then they will increasingly have to co-exist with humans on land – and in a constantly hungry state at that. Residents must carry a rifle beyond town boundaries.

Polar bears are normally solitary animals, but occur in small groups if there is plenty food somewhere. Female bears with cubs are extremely wary on such occasions, as a male will kill her cubs and try and mate with her to produce his own. Bears mate in early summer and give birth in the middle of winter. For this, the female digs a den deep into the snow, and stays in there, suckling her young, till about March. After this, the cub stays with mum for 2-3 years, during which time they avoid any contact with male bears.
It is estimated that the arctic region is home to 2500 – 3000 polar bears and an estimate of the total number is 25-30000. Some consequences of having to spend longer periods of time on land are reduced size, fewer offspring and a higher overall mortality.

In the short arctic summer, plants have to grow, flower, be pollinated and set seed all in about three month. Although in much of that time, the sun is out 24 hours of the day, the low temperatures do not allow rapid photosynthesis and growth is slow. All plants are low growing – if any plant would grow taller than the others, the prevailing winds would probably kill it. Even trees (e.g. dwarf birch) are only a few centimetres tall, and creeping along the ground. Wind pollination is very important here, but in spite of the temperatures, there are many insects around too, which form an important food source for birds.

One has to be awe of some of the adaptation displayed by the animals and plants that live here. Guillemots lay their single egg on ledges of the dolerite cliff faces. The egg has a peculiar shape, which causes it to turn in a circle when knocked, rather than roll down the cliff face.

Carol travelled on the 'Polar Pioneer', which carried 50 passengers and 8 expedition staff. After circumnavigating Svalbard, they went on to Greenland and visited some Inuit settlements along the west coast (the warmer side). There were many spectacular glacier and iceberg views, and also much geology to be seen in the fjords.
Animal seen here were arctic foxes (fur changes to brown in the summer), arctic hares (fur stays white all year...why?), and musk ox (which are more closely related to sheep, not cattle) and a fantastic number of birds.

It was a spectacular presentation, and I was happy to learn, amongst many other things, why some icebergs have an intense blue colour. Normally, ice that originates from frozen snow has many air bubbles trapped in it (which, incidentally, are used to analyse atmospheric conditions over past eras), but if the ice originates from melt-water, there are no air bubbles and it thus appears blue, like water.

Communities for Nature Grants Now Open

The Communities for Nature (CfN) grants program was launched on Sunday Oct 9. The program is aimed at community organisations wanting to undertake practical, on-ground, local environmental projects. The grants are open to almost any type of community organisation, not just environmental groups.

Applications are now open for a $20 million Communities for Nature grants program. The

program will run for four years, with $4 million available in 2011. Communities for Nature grants are for local community groups and organisations looking to improve their natural environment and conserve local biodiversity values. Activities that will be funded include biodiversity and habitat preservation, revegetation, cleaning up of waterways and control of pests and weeds. This year, two streams of funding are being offered; small grants of up to $10,000 and large grants for $10,000 to $150,000. The Department of Sustainability and Environment is implementing this Victorian Government program. For more information on the assessment criteria and application process, visit
www.dse.vic.gov.au/communitiesfornature or contact the Grants Information Line on 1300 366 356. **Applications close on Monday 19 December 2011**

The types of groups eligible include (but are not limited to): Committees of Management, Schools, Friends Groups, Field Naturalist Clubs, Scout Groups, Conservation Management Networks, Rotary, Lions, Apex Clubs Sustainability & Environment Groups Landcare Groups, Land For Wildlife Groups, Birds Australia/BOCA, Bush Heritage Conservation Volunteers Australia, CFA Groups.
Peter Johnson is the contact for the DSE North West region and he is available to assist applicants with the technical feasibility of their projects. There is a regional contact for other parts of the state, where applicable. Please distribute to anyone who may be interested.

Contact: Peter Johnson, Senior Biodiversity Officer, Land For Wildlife Co-ordinator, Biodiversity Sevices, Department of Sustainability and Environment PO Box 3100, Bendigo Delivery Centre BENDIGO VIC 3554
Ph (03) 5430 4358, Mob 0409 793 364, Fax (03) 5448 4982

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, November 9 **7.30pm**
Jeff Jeanes, National Herbarium. 'The Victorian Conservation Seedbank Project'

Wednesday, December 14 6.30pm
For the December general meeting, we share a meal, to which everyone is welcome to contribute something (hence the earlier starting time). The theme of the night is "A Wander Down Memory Lane"
Members are invited to bring memorabilia for display such as photos, newspaper clippings, specimens and interesting artifacts. Members can also bring a few slides (a maximum of 10 per member). You are invited to give a brief talk (no more than 10 minutes) about your items and stories of club doings. Past members are also welcome, so if you know of any who would like to come, please invite them.

BFNC Garden Working-bee
Saturday November 5th 1:00 pm

Can you spare an hour or two as there is weeding and general neatening to do? Please bring your own gloves and equipment. Many hands will make a cheerful afternoon, so we look forward to seeing you there.

The Great Big Annual BFNC Hall Clean-up
Saturday December 17th, 9:00 am - 12:00 noon

We will focus on cleaning the windows and kitchen and removing litter, spiderwebs and dust from the building.
So, come prepared with your favourite cleaning equipment and it's 'all hands to the pump'

It is important to remember that the general cleaning of the hall is an important part of the Hall Management agreement the BFNC has with the City of Greater Bendigo. In return, the club gets free use of the hall. We hope to see you on the 17th.

Fauna Group Annual Picnic/BBQ

When: **Wednesday, 23rd November 6.30pm**
At: 'Kangaroo Flat Lions Park' Camp St Kangaroo Flat
Bring: BYO food, refreshments, binoculars, camera and insect repellant etc. BBQ provided
All welcome for an evening of sharing a meal, stories and good cheer

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

Family Nature Club November activity
A look at local wildlife
When: Sunday 27 November 2011 10am – 12pm
Where: Location provided on registration
Cost: Nothing, it's free
Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326

Northern Bendigo Landcare Group
The group has organized a trip to Ballarat on Saturday 5th November (leaving from St Clements Church, Huntly at 9am, returning 5pm), and there are a few vacancies.
They plan to visit the Yarrowee Creek Regeneration project and the Creswick seed bank.
Please ring Ian Magee, 54478375 or Nicole 54488244. There is no cost involved